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Agenda item 126
Human resources management

Streamlining of rules

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

As requested by the General Assembly in section VIII of its resolution 55/258, the present note provides details of the obsolete or redundant documentation which has been eliminated so far in the context of the streamlining of the rules.

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1. The present note is submitted in response to section VIII of resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001, in which the General Assembly noted the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General mentioned in paragraphs 27 to 32 of his report on human resources management reform (A/55/253 and Corr.1) regarding the elimination of documentation relating to obsolete and redundant rules and procedures, and requested to be informed at its fifty-sixth session of the details of the documentation being eliminated.

2. The note deals exclusively with the work done in respect of policies and rules issued by the Secretary-General or on his behalf through instruments subject to the Staff Regulations and the Staff Rules.

Background

3. For many years, policies, rules and procedures were issued by various officials in a variety of instruments, including Secretary-General's bulletins, administrative instructions, information circulars, personnel directives or internal guidelines. There was no systematic review of these instruments, which proliferated and remained in place regardless of whether they were still needed, or had become inconsistent with subsequent documents. As a result, it was often difficult for staff, administrators and managers to know what the rules were and for the Organization to hold anyone accountable for the proper application of these rules.

4. On 27 May 1997, the Secretary-General, at the suggestion of the Legal Counsel, promulgated a bulletin[1] which rationalized the system of administrative issuances and established procedures for the promulgation of these issuances. The bulletin highlighted the obligation of the responsible officials to review issuances periodically so as to ensure that the contents are up to date, that obsolete issuances are abolished with minimum delay, and that new issuances or amendments are properly promulgated. The bulletin also established a mechanism to ensure that the position of any proposed new administrative issuance in the hierarchy of rules and the authority for its issuance are identified, that it is not inconsistent with issuances higher in the hierarchy of rules, that it specifies prior issuances that are superseded or amended, and that it is concise, clear and appropriately expressed.

5. Under the new system, "rules" or "imperatives" can be promulgated only through a Secretary-General's bulletin or an administrative instruction. Personnel directives can no longer be issued, and all existing ones lapsed on 31 December 1999.[2] Information circulars can only contain general information or an explanation of established rules but can no longer, on their own, establish new rules. New information circulars are issued with an expiry date, unless they deal with a matter calling for frequent review or update, in which case they are in force until further notice and then replaced. All information circulars published before the new system came into force expired on 31 December 2000.[3] Before personnel directives and information circulars expired, the Secretariat reviewed their contents to identify provisions that would still be useful or relevant, in order to incorporate them into an administrative instruction or an information circular issued in accordance with the new system.

[1] Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/1, entitled "Procedures for the promulgation of administrative issuances".

[2] ST/SGB/1997/1, section 8.3.

[3] ST/SGB/1999/11, section 3.2.

Abolition of obsolete or redundant rules

6. A major effort was required to review and rationalize the subsidiary rules issued before the new system came into force. As noted in the Secretary-General's report on human resources management reform submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, these rules were still disseminated in many different documents which were not always easy to find or comprehend, and some documents were obsolete or redundant.[4] The process was conducted as described below.

7. A number of obsolete or redundant issuances were abolished outright in three Secretary-General's bulletins annexed to this note. The decision to include a document in these bulletins was made after a determination that the document fell into one of following categories:

(a) Issuances establishing or setting rules for bodies no longer in existence. This is the case for instance for:

(i) Financial Rules for the Special Account of the United Nations Emergency Force (ST/SGB/UNEF/2/Rev.2 of 30 December 1960);

(ii) Establishment of a Senior Advisory Board on Services to the Public (ST/SGB/231 of 20 June 1989);

(iii) Establishment of a Senior Planning and Monitoring Group for Peacekeeping Operations (ST/SGB/233 of 4 January 1990);

(iv) Technological Innovations Board (ST/SGB/245 of 5 December 1991);

(v) Advisory Panel on Management and Finance (ST/SGB/270 of 14 January 1994);

(b) Issuances announcing the introduction of new rules subsequently incorporated in the Staff Rules, or into a more comprehensive issuance on the same subject. This is the case for instance for:

(i) Competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories (ST/SGB/173 of 29 August 1979). The requirement of a competitive examination for movement to the Professional category from other categories was subsequently reflected in staff rule 104.15, detailed implementation provisions being set out in an administrative instruction;

(ii) Obligations of staff members (ST/AI/182 of 17 December 1968) and acceptance of payments from Governments to supplement United Nations emoluments (ST/AI/380 of 23 December 1992). The rules contained in these issuances were incorporated into the revision of article I of the Staff Regulations and chapter I of the Staff Rules pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/252;

(iii) Overtime compensation at Headquarters (ST/AI/265 of 16 May 1979). The new rules contained in that instruction were subsequently incorporated into appendix B to the Staff Rules;

[4] A/55/253 and Corr.1, para. 26.

(iv) Granting of status of staff members to full-time language teachers (ST/AI/316 of 6 March 1984), subsequently reflected in a new annex F to the Staff Rules;

(v) Official United Nations travel to and representation at conferences and meetings (ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 of 16 December 1987). Most of the rules contained in that issuance were obsolete; the remaining ones were incorporated into a new administrative instruction on official travel;

(c) Issuances announcing systems that were subsequently updated and replaced. This is the case for instance for:

(i) In-service training and career development for Secretariat staff (ST/SGB/144 of 28 December 1973);

(ii) Outposting of staff from the established location of a department to another location (ST/AI/245 of 11 May 1977);

(iii) Revised telegraph form (ST/AI/330 of 11 July 1985);

(iv) Policies and procedures for office automation standardization (ST/AI/347 of 9 March 1988); guidelines for the acquisition, use and support of microcomputers in the United Nations (ST/AI/355 of 7 September 1988); standards for desktop publishing hardware and software (ST/AI/359 of 12 December 1989); standards for word-processing software for microcomputers (ST/AI/361 of 29 March 1990); electronic mail policies and standards (ST/AI/386 of 23 August 1993);

(d) Issuances announcing measures to deal with a temporary condition. This is the case for instance for:

(i) Temporary suspension of recruitment (ST/SGB/247 of 6 February 1992);

(ii) Financial situation of the Organization (ST/SGB/278 of 14 September 1995);

(iii) Redeployment of staff (ST/AI/415 of 2 April 1996);

(e) Issuances providing information to the staff on topical subjects. It should be noted that, under the new system of administrative issuances, documents issued for information purposes only may no longer be issued as Secretary-General's bulletins or administrative issuances. This is the case for instance for:

(i) Changed audit emphasis by the United Nations Board of Auditors (ST/AI/241 of 8 October 1976);

(ii) Report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts and related decisions of the General Assembly (ST/AI/336 of 15 September 1986).

8. Many other issuances were abolished as a result of the streamlining of the rules that were not abolished outright. For instance, the rules on classification of posts are now contained in ST/AI/1998/9, issued on 6 October 1998, which updated and consolidated provisions previously contained in 21 documents. Similarly, the rules on excess baggage, shipments and insurance are now contained in ST/AI/1999/15, issued on 23 November 1999, which updated and consolidated provisions previously contained in 18 documents. Another example is ST/AI/2000/20, issued on 22 December 2000, on official travel, which updated and

consolidated provisions previously contained in 9 issuances. All new issuances systematically update and abolish prior issuances dealing with the same subject. Consolidation of any rules affecting conditions of service and staff welfare always include consultation with staff.

9. Altogether, from 1 June 1997 until 31 August 2001, 460 documents have been abolished, or have lapsed or expired:

- 92 Secretary-General's bulletins;
- 86 administrative instructions;
- 224 information circulars;
- 58 personnel directives.

Annex I

UNITED NATIONS

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Secretariat

ST/SGB/1997/4*
15 September 1997

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BULLETIN

ABOLITION OF OBSOLETE ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUANCES

The Secretary-General, for the purpose of abolishing obsolete administrative issuances, promulgates the following:

Section 1

Secretary-General's bulletins

The following Secretary-General's bulletins are hereby abolished as from 15 September 1997:

ST/SGB/UNIDF/Financial Rules/4 of 19 November 1982, "Special annex for the United Nations Industrial Development Fund (series 400) to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations (series 100)"

ST/SGB/Organization, Section N/Rev.2 of 29 February 1984 (and Corr.1 and Amend.1 of 4 April 1984 and 23 July 1984, respectively), "Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator"

ST/SGB/Organization, Section P(VI) of March 1976, "Electronic Data-Processing and Information Systems Service"

ST/SGB/Organization, Section WFC of 18 October 1991, "Secretariat of the World Food Council"

ST/SGB/114 of 13 November 1958 and Add.1 of 2 May 1960, "Service with United Nations missions"

* Originally issued in English and French only.

ST/SGB/156 of 21 June 1977, "Documentation for the Fifth Committee"

ST/SGB/162 of 23 March 1978, "Establishment of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development"

ST/SGB/164 of 22 November 1982, "Establishment of the Administrative Review Unit"

ST/SGB/170 of 29 December 1978 and Add.1 of 30 June 1980, "Organizational nomenclature in the Secretariat"

ST/SGB/178 of 30 June 1980, "Department of Technical Cooperation for Development"

ST/SGB/182 of 5 January 1981, "Office of General Services"

ST/SGB/184 of 12 January 1982 and Add.1 of 24 February 1982, "Documentation for meetings"

ST/SGB/186 of 22 February 1982, "Reorganization of the administrative services in the United Nations Office at Geneva"

ST/SGB/189 of 1 April 1982, "Reorganization of the Conference Services Division of the United Nations Office at Geneva"

ST/SGB/191 of 10 May 1982, "Office of General Services"

ST/SGB/192 of 16 June 1982, "United Nations garage"

ST/SGB/197 of 1 December 1982, "United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations"

ST/SGB/215 of 17 January 1986, "Financial situation of the Organization"

ST/SGB/216/Add.1 of 27 March 1989, Add.2 of 30 April 1991 and Add.5 of 8 May 1995, "Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat"

ST/SGB/217 of 20 March 1986, "Financial situation of the Organization"

ST/SGB/222 of 22 December 1986, "Financial situation of the Organization"

ST/SGB/224 of 13 February 1987, "Office of Human Resources Management"

ST/SGB/241 of 26 June 1991, "Organization of the Secretariat: Office of General Services"

ST/SGB/248 of 16 March 1992, "Restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat"

ST/SGB/249 of 16 March 1992, "Changes in the top echelon"

ST/SGB/257 of 26 January 1993, "Organization of the Secretariat: Department of Public Information"

ST/SGB/258 of 11 March 1993, "Changes in the top echelon"

ST/SGB/265 of 28 October 1993, "Changes in the top echelon"

ST/SGB/271 of 5 August 1994, "Reorganization of the Department of Administration and Management"

ST/SGB/281 of 30 November 1995, "Efficiency Board"

Section 2

Administrative instructions

Existing administrative instructions shall be reviewed as soon as practicable and those deemed obsolete shall be abolished.

Section 3

Final provision

The present bulletin shall enter into force on 15 September 1997 and shall be struck from the register of current issuances on 31 December 1999.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN
Secretary-General

Annex II

United Nations ST/SGB/1999/11*

Secretariat

30 June 1999

Secretary-General's bulletin

Abolition of obsolete administrative issuances and information circulars

The Secretary-General, for the purpose of abolishing administrative issuances and information circulars containing rules and provisions which, are either no longer applicable, owing to changed circumstances, or which have been incorporated into or replaced by new administrative issuances, and for the purpose of streamlining the rules of the Organization, promulgates the following:

Section 1
Secretary-General's bulletins

The following Secretary-General's bulletins are hereby abolished:

ST/SGB/UNEF/2/Rev.2 of 30 December 1960, entitled "Financial Rules for the Special Account for the United Nations Emergency Force"

ST/SGB/134 of 8 August 1967, entitled "United Nations Social Defence Research Institute"

ST/SGB/144 of 28 December 1973, entitled "In-service training and career development for Secretariat staff"

ST/SGB/166 of 18 May 1978, entitled "Establishment of a career development system"

ST/SGB/173 of 29 August 1979, entitled "Competitive examinations for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories"

* Originally issued in English and French only.

ST/SGB/247 of 6 February 1992, entitled "Temporary suspension of recruitment"

ST/SGB/272 of 9 August 1994, entitled "Security of information"

Section 2
Administrative instructions

The following administrative instructions are hereby abolished:

ST/AI/182 of 17 December 1968, entitled "Obligations of staff members"

ST/AI/209 of 5 January 1972, entitled "Pensionable remuneration on promotion to Professional category"

ST/AI/245 of 11 May 1977, entitled "Outposting of staff from the established location of a department to another location"

ST/AI/283 of 27 January 1982, entitled "Official holidays"

ST/AI/298 and Amend.1 of 28 February 1983 and 15 October 1984, respectively, entitled "Overtime and night differential for staff in the General Service and related categories"

ST/AI/316 of 6 March 1984, entitled "Granting of status of staff members to full-time language teachers"

ST/AI/336 of 15 September 1986, entitled "Report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts and related decisions of the General Assembly"

ST/AI/365 and Corr.1 of 13 August and 24 September 1990, respectively, entitled "Implementation of changes to salary policy in promotions"

ST/AI/380 of 23 December 1992, entitled "Acceptance of payments from Governments to supplement United Nations emoluments"

ST/AI/415 of 2 April 1996, entitled "Redeployment of staff"

Section 3
Information circulars

3.1 The following information circulars are abolished:

ST/ADM/SER.A/277 of 8 October 1954, entitled "Standards of conduct in the international civil service"

ST/ADM/SER.A/564 of 30 September 1959, entitled "To clarify application of United Nations compensation (and related) rules to United Nations staff members"

ST/IC/79/10 of 24 January 1979, entitled "Unauthorized absence"

ST/IC/81/19 of 10 March 1981, entitled "Review of General Service staff members recommended for promotion to the Professional category for the 1979 register"

ST/IC/82/13 of 26 February 1982, entitled "Standards of conduct"

ST/IC/86/52 of 10 October 1986, entitled "Career development and placement of staff"

ST/IC/86/62 of 24 November 1986, entitled "Career development plan for the General Service and related categories in New York"

ST/IC/89/2 of 5 January 1989, entitled "Conduct of staff members"

ST/IC/1990/63 of 30 August 1990, entitled "Language allowance for staff in the Trades and Crafts category at Headquarters"

ST/IC/1992/18 of 6 March 1992, entitled "Separation payments for staff in the Professional and higher categories"

ST/IC/1995/8 of 28 February 1995, entitled "Mission readiness workshops"

ST/IC/1996/10 of 2 February 1996, entitled "Conduct of staff in their relations with government representatives"

3.2 All other information circulars issued before 1 June 1997, when Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/2, entitled "Information circulars" entered into force, will expire as at 31 December 2000. Provisions which need to be maintained will be promulgated through administrative issuances in accordance with Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/1, or reissued as information circulars in accordance with Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/2.

Section 4

The present bulletin shall enter into force on 1 July 1999.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**
Secretary-General

Annex III

United Nations ST/SGB/2000/16 *

Secretariat

13 December 2000

Secretary-General's bulletin

Abolition of obsolete administrative issuances

The Secretary-General, for the purpose of abolishing administrative issuances containing rules and provisions that are either no longer applicable, owing to changed circumstances, or that have been incorporated into or replaced by new administrative issuances, and for the purpose of streamlining the rules of the Organization, promulgates the following:

Section 1
Secretary-General's bulletins

The following Secretary-General's bulletins are hereby abolished:

ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 of 16 December 1987, entitled "Official United Nations travel to and representation at conferences and meetings";

ST/SGB/231 of 20 June 1989, entitled "Establishment of a Senior Advisory Board on Services to the Public";

ST/SGB/233 of 4 January 1990, entitled "Establishment of a Senior Planning and Monitoring Group for Peacekeeping Operations";

ST/SGB/245 of 5 December 1991, entitled "Technological Innovations Board";

ST/SGB/270 of 14 January 1994, entitled "Advisory Panel on Management and Finance";

ST/SGB/278 of 14 September 1995, entitled "Financial situation of the organization".

* Originally issued in English and French only.

Section 2
Administrative instructions

The following administrative instructions are hereby abolished:

ST/AI/67/Rev.6 of 30 July 1979, entitled "Procedure for sale of copies of United Nations sound recordings";

ST/AI/82 of 16 August 1950, entitled "Authority for mailing official United Nations publications and supplies and equipment";

ST/AI/241 of 8 October 1976, entitled "Changed audit emphasis by United Nations Board of Auditors";

ST/AI/265 of 16 May 1979, entitled "Overtime compensation at Headquarters";

ST/AI/320 and Add.1 of 14 September 1984 and 1 November 1984, respectively, and ST/AI/320/Add.1/Corr.1 and 2 of 8 November and 18 December 1984, respectively, entitled "Staff incentive programme";

ST/AI/329 of 17 June 1985, entitled "Requisition for equipment, supplies or services — form PT.72";

ST/AI/330 of 11 July 1985, entitled "Revised telegraph form";

ST/AI/339 of 3 April 1987, entitled "Acquisition, replacement and maintenance of office automation equipment";

ST/AI/345 of 20 October 1987, entitled "The establishment and operation of technological innovations committees at regional commissions and other locations away from Headquarters";

ST/AI/347 of 9 March 1988, entitled "Policies and procedures for office automation standardization";

ST/AI/355 of 7 September 1988, entitled "Guidelines for the acquisition, use and support of microcomputers in the United Nations";

ST/AI/359 of 12 December 1989, entitled "Standards for desktop publishing hardware and software";

ST/AI/361 of 29 March 1990, entitled "Standard for word-processing software for microcomputers";

ST/AI/386 of 23 August 1993, entitled "Electronic mail policies and standards".

Section 3
Final provision

The present bulletin shall enter into force on 31 December 2000.

Kofi A. Annan
Secretary-General